

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6381
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1117

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, AG
SUBJECT: STUDENT UNREST AT ALGIERS UNIVERSITY

1. IN PAST SEVERAL DAYS, STUDENT UNREST AT ALGIERS UNIVERSITY HAS ESCALATED. FOLLOWING BOYCOTT OF CAFETERIA AT FACULTY OF LAW IN EARLY APRIL, STUDENTS IN ARABIC LANGUAGE PROGRAM THERE BEGAN STAYING AWAY FROM CLASSES TO PROTEST LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARABISTS IN ADMINISTRATION, AND PARTICULARLY IN NATIONAL COMPANIES. BOYCOTT, WHICH BEGAN AROUND APRIL 10, NOW APPEARS TO BE TOTAL WITH MILITANTS BLOCKING ACCESS TO CLASSROOMS TO ASSURE FULL COMPLIANCE. ACCORDING TO STUDENT SOURCES, FRENCH LANGUAGE STUDENTS AT FACULTY HAVE JOINED THEIR ARABIZED COLLEAGUES AS GESTURE OF SYMPATHY, AND ARABIZED INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY, WHICH LOCATED SEVERAL MILES FROM FACULTY OF LAW, ALSO ON STRIKE. SOURCE ADDS THAT FACULTY OF LAW STUDENTS NOW APPEALING TO COLLEAGUES IN CENTRAL UNIVERSITY TO MAKE BOYCOTT TOTAL.

2. STRIKE LEADERS, ACCORDING TO STUDENT SOURCE, BELONG TO PARTI DE LA REVOLUTION SOCIALISTE (PRS), GROUP WHICH HAS BEEN CIRCULATING TRACTS AT UNIVERSITY AND ELSEWHERE FOR SOME
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MONTHS. HEAD OF THIS GROUP, MOHAMED BOUDIAF, ONE OF NINE "HISTORIC" LEADERS OF ALGERIAN REVOLUTION, HAS BEEN LIVING IN EXILE IN MOROCCO FOR SOME YEARS, AND DEGREE OF HIS INVOLVMENT IN CURRENT DISSIDENCE NOT KNOWN. LEADERS, WHOM SOURCE BELIEVES NUMBER LESS THAN 50, HAVE DEMANDED THAT REGIME EITHER OPEN NATIONAL COMPANIES TO ARABIZED JOB

APPLICANTS OR DROP ARABIZATION PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. AFTER MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION TURNED DEAF EAR TO THEIR PROTEST, MILITANTS ADDRESSED LETTER TO BOUMEDIENE BUT RECEIVED ONLY EQUIVOCAL REPLY THROUGH DEAN OF FACULTY. THEY HAVE THEREFORE ORDERED STRIKE TO CONTINUE.

3. TO DATE, THERE HAS BEEN NO VIOLENCE IN STRIKE, AND FACULTY OF LAW CAMPUS APPEARS TO CASUAL OBSERVER TO BE FUNCTIONING NORMALLY. SECURITY FORCES HAVE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO OPEN ACCESS TO CLASSES OR TO HALT ENDLESS SERIES OF MEETINGS WHICH TAKING PLACE THERE. STRIKERS THEMSELVES HAVE BEEN PEACEABLE ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN VERBAL CLASHES BETWEEN MILITANTS AND MORE MODERATE "VOLUNTARIAT" STUDENTS WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN VACATION WORK PROGRAMS IN COUNTRYSIDE AND WHO REPORTEDLY ARE URGING "PEACEFUL" SOLUTION TO PROBLEM.

4. SOURCE NOTES THAT, LIKE "VOLUNTARIAT" ELEMENTS, COMMUNIST PARTI DE L'AVANT GARDE SOCIALISTE (PAGS) HAS BEEN INACTIVE IN STRIKE. PAGS HAS BEEN GIVING REGIME CAUTIONS SUPPORT IN RECENT TRACTS.

5. SOURCE BELIEVES THAT STRIKE WILL NOT BE SETTLED EASILY FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, BOYCOTT OF CAFETERIA WAS SUCCESSFUL IN CAUSING IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF FOOD, AND STRIKE AT BEGINNING OF ACADEMIC YEAR THWARTED UNIVERSITY'S ATTEMPT TO INCREASE NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS OF DORMITORY ROOMS. THUS, STUDENTS NO LONGER FEAR THOUGH SECURITY FORCE RESPONSE SIMILAR TO ONE WHICH REPORTEDLY CAUSED SEVERAL DEATHS
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DURING STRIKE IN 1975. INDEED, MILITANTS OPENLY THREATENING TO "TRASH" UNIVERSITY FACILITIES IF THEY DO NOT RECEIVE MORE CONCRETE RESPONSE TO THEIR DEMANDS.

6. COMMENT: THERE APPEARS LITTLE DOUBT ABOUT TRUTH OF CHARGE OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ARABISTS BY NATIONAL SOCIETIES, WHOSE HIGH SALARIES MAKE THEM MOST SOUGHT AFTER EMPLOYERS IN ALGERIA. INDEED, FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMA OF ARABISTS IS THAT, SINCE TECHNICAL SUBJECTS NORMALLY TAUGHT IN FRENCH, THEY ARE FORCED TO BE "BA GENERALISTS" WHOSE TALENTS MUCH LESS IN DEMAND THAT THOSE OF THEIR SCIENTIFICALLY-ORIENTED PEERS. THUS, DISCRIMINATION APPEARS LIKELY TO CONTINUE UNTIL SUCH TIME AS ALL ASPECTS OF ALGERIAN EDUCATION ARABIZED.

7. ALTHOUGH DIFFICULT TO BE SURE, WE WOULD ESTIMATE THAT, DESPITE BOUDIAF'S NOMINAL LEADERSHIP OF PRS, PARTY AND ITS DEMONSTRATION HOME GROWN PRODUCTS.

THROUGH ITS TRACTS, PRS HAS BEEN RAISING ITS VOICE
AGAINST ALL ASPECTS OF REGIME'S POLICIES, FROM SAHARA
TO "ELECTORAL MASQUERADE", AND THERE ARE REPORTS THAT
IT HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME MINOR VANDALISM IN
COUNTRYSIDE. UNTIL NOW, HOWEVER, WE HAVE NOT CONSIDERED
GROUP A SIGNIFICANT FORCE AND UNDERSTAND THAT REGIME VIEWED
IT IN SAME LIGHT.

8. REGIME'S MILD RESPONSE TO DISSIDENCE IS IN KEEPING
WITH ITS LESS REPRESSIVE STANCE IN OTHER AREAS. WE SUSPECT
THAT MILDNESS WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME, PROVIDED
THAT STUDENTS DO NOT MAKE GOOD THEIR REPORTED THREAT
TO ATTACK UNIVERSITY FACILITIES.

9. IN LONGER RUN, HOWEVER, ISSUE RAISED BY DEMONSTRATION
IS FUNDAMENTAL TO VAUNTED CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND UNLIKELY
TO BE RESOLVED IN NEAR FUTURE. IT WILL GIVE NEW CABINET
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT IN COMING MONTHS.LYNE
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